Applicability of IT Systems in Business in the Context of the Digitalization of Economic Processes

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Abstract

In a dynamic economic environment characterized by intense competition and the demand for real-time information, information systems—particularly cloud-based solutions—play a critical role in ensuring competitiveness. Knowledge-based organizations leverage these systems to collect, extract, label, organize, process, and disseminate knowledge, thereby enabling more effective business solutions and informed decision-making. These systems also enhance collaboration and improve access to relevant information.

The responsiveness of Information Systems (IS) is crucial for adapting to rapid economic changes. This study focuses on cloud-based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, highlighting their contributions to efficient resource management and improved decision-making processes. The methodology involves a comparative analysis of companies that have implemented ERP/CRM solutions versus those that have not, using data derived from case studies and financial analyses. Adapting the decision-making process represents a significant factor in distinguishing a successful organization from one operating at a deficit or an efficient public service or administration from a bureaucratic one.

Key words: digitalization, cloud computing, ERP, data security, competitiveness
J.E.L. classification: C81, M10, O32

1. Introduction

In the era of accelerated digitalization, enterprises worldwide are under constant pressure to optimize their processes and remain competitive in a globalized economic environment. The digitalization of economic processes involves integrating information technologies (IT) into all aspects of an organization's activities, facilitating real-time access to information, reducing operational costs, and improving decision-making efficiency. Among these technologies, ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) and CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems play a central role in managing organizational resources and customer relationships.

According to authors Jacobs, F.R., and Bendoly, E. (2003), ERP represents an information system that integrates and manages all aspects of business knowledge, including production planning, sales, procurement, distribution, services, accounting, and customer relationship management. In 2011, Parker, B. analyzed Business Intelligence tools and found that they could be interfaced with ERP systems to improve managerial decision-making and provide useful insights on organizational positioning, market trends, and competitor information. An ERP system must deliver structured information, covering the entire organizational activity down to departmental performance, with detailed data on specific activities. While a standard ERP package may be a solution for small and medium-sized enterprises, larger companies require customized systems tailored to their specific

needs. Likewise, CRM systems play a crucial role in managing customer interactions, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty. The integration of CRM with ERP systems provides companies with a holistic approach, not only to internal operations but also to market engagement and customer relationships.

As digitalization progresses, an increasing number of companies are choosing to adopt cloud-based ERP and CRM solutions. Cloud computing offers enhanced flexibility, scalability, and accessibility, eliminating the need for costly hardware infrastructure and reducing maintenance costs. In this new business model, companies can leverage external IT resources, paying only for what they consume, which allows them to adapt quickly to economic changes and focus on innovation and growth. The adoption of cloud-based ERP and CRM systems has thus become a vital strategy for companies seeking to remain competitive, streamline their processes, and improve their customer relationships. This study examines how these systems can transform companies, presenting real-world cases and economic analyses that demonstrate the positive impact of these solutions on organizational performance.

2. Literature review

In recent years, research on business digitalization and the integration of information systems, such as ERP and CRM, has intensified, reflecting the need for companies to adapt rapidly to the dynamic economic environment. Cloud technologies, especially Software as a Service (SaaS) solutions, have become a popular choice due to their reduced costs and increased scalability. A review of recent literature demonstrates the importance of these technologies in enhancing operational efficiency and supporting market competitiveness.

Several recent studies have examined the impact of digitalization on companies, emphasizing that adopting digital technologies is essential for maintaining market competitiveness. Kauffman and Ma (2021) highlighted that with the increase in data volume and the complexity of economic processes, companies adopting digital solutions gain greater adaptability to market changes. Moreover, the McKinsey Global Institute (2020) showed that digitalization could increase a company's productivity by up to 25% by optimizing processes and improving managerial decisions. ERP and CRM systems have been recognized as crucial for the efficient management of resources and customer relationships.

According to Thomas and Rowe (2022), the implementation of these systems, particularly when cloud-based, provides companies with a competitive advantage by reducing operational costs and improving transparency within the supply chain. Additionally, research by Cheng and Liu (2021) demonstrated that adopting modern ERP systems can reduce implementation time by 30%, while also enhancing resource management and operational efficiency. The adoption of cloud technologies and SaaS solutions has significantly accelerated in recent years. Kapoor and Murthy (2020) emphasized that migrating to cloud solutions offers substantial benefits, such as reduced IT infrastructure costs and increased scalability. Furthermore, a study by Gartner (2021) found that 70% of companies that adopted SaaS solutions experienced a significant increase in productivity and a reduction in downtime. Another important aspect discussed in the literature is data security in the cloud. Researchers Smith and Johnson (2023) highlighted that as cloud adoption grows, protecting against cyberattacks becomes a major concern. Their study shows that advanced security measures, such as encryption and multi-factor authentication. Have significantly reduced the risks of cyberattacks for companies that adopted cloud solutions.

Zhou and Tang (2022) explore the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and Business Intelligence (BI) solutions within ERP and CRM systems. These advanced technologies enable companies to analyze large volumes of data and make informed decisions, boosting operational efficiency and providing valuable insights into market trends and consumer behavior.

3. Findings

3.1. Cloud computing - a new business model

Given the rapid growth in the volume of information within companies and the increasing variety of data types that need storage, businesses require a modern approach to unify the management of their applications and data files, enabling them to adapt more flexibly to market dynamics. To remain competitive and effectively manage the large quantities of information, many companies are turning to IT infrastructure outsourcing services.

Outsourcing IT infrastructure to "data centers" enhances employee productivity, mitigates or eliminates substantial costs associated with major disruptions, safeguards data against accidental or intentional loss or damage, and facilitates the swift resumption of critical operations after interruptions. The adoption of cloud computing is also expanding in developing countries. Globally, cloud-based software applications accessible via the Internet represent a multi-billion euro industry. In Romania, the market is still emerging, with only a limited number of companies currently leveraging such solutions. Significant effort is required to educate businesses about the potential benefits of cloud computing. Providers of cloud hosting services offer an array of options, including hosting, installation, and cloud computing services, as well as crucial complementary services like business continuity, data backup, and disaster recovery.

Cloud computing enables the use of external IT resources configured to specific needs, with costs determined based on actual consumption. For instance, a business can access a tailored suite of applications in the cloud for a limited number of employees, optimizing IT expenditures. This approach introduces a new business model where technology is delivered as an online service. Users access software applications via the Internet without purchasing licenses, instead paying a monthly fee. For businesses, cloud computing offers two major advantages: reduced expenses and the efficient allocation of resources, adjusted precisely to the current workforce size. To illustrate, traditional IT solutions can be likened to owning and maintaining a personal vehicle, whereas cloud computing resembles a car-sharing service, offering flexibility and cost savings. Enterprise Resource Planning [ERP Software Gets a Second Life in the Cloud by Cindy Waxer, July 14, 2011 Technology Review, published by MIT] promised to automate and integrate everything from order tracking to product distribution and production scheduling. Now, however, innovations are making the technology more useful and cost-effective. The software can be hosted remotely ("in the cloud") and used on mobile phones. It can help manufacturers reduce costs and streamline their operations for much less than the costs of traditional ERP systems. [Waxer,C., 2011 Review Technology]

SaaS stands for "Software as a Service" and is essentially the "rental" of software. SaaS applications are generally web-based, accessible from anywhere, requiring only a browser and an Internet connection. "While some customers are reluctant to move business-critical applications to the cloud, others see clear cost benefits." [Ramdas S., Sonal Desai, CRN. - Computer Reseller News, The Cloud Landscape by Ramdas S and Sonal Desai].

3.2. The Benefits and Trends of Adopting ERP and CRM in the Modern Business Environment

It provides flexibility in activity management and scalability, along with opportunities to develop new functionalities. Experience gained from implementing CRM and ERP systems highlights the importance of thoroughly analyzing both internal and external factors that influence a company's growth. This analysis is critical for transforming such systems into effective tools for management decision-making. Introducing an Integrated Information System within a company can be a lengthy and costly process. The drive to minimize these costs has spurred the evolution of these solutions and the advancement of new technologies.

The Cloud-based ERP system represents a modern alternative, offering a flexible, adaptable, scalable, efficient, and cost-effective approach. Unlike traditional ERP systems, the Cloud solution is designed to streamline deployment, facilitate faster upgrades, and provide extensive customization options. With features such as accessibility "anytime and anywhere," quick implementation, and online technical support, businesses can significantly enhance their operations.

As with any implementation model, both benefits and challenges must be considered. However, the Cloud ERP solution delivers enhanced business value by meeting organizational requirements more effectively, ultimately boosting both individual and organizational productivity. "But, it is important to remember that the ERP solution in the Cloud (ERP – New Dog, Same Fleas,May 22, 2011 by Brett Beaubouef) is not a shortcut to success" [Beaubouef B., 2011].

Figure no. 1 Advantages of migrating to Online

Advantages of migrating to Online	Increasing the productivity of mobile users or those who do not have a dedicated computer (Deskless Workers)
	Realizes Cost Savings
	Quickly implement and expand role-based functionalities according to needs
	Benefit from the already tested infrastructure of data centers dedicated to online services

Source: Created by the author, https://www.bitdefender.ro/business

The advantages embedded in technology include flexibility, which allows for adaptations and updates to meet evolving needs.

1. Flexibility is a fundamental principle in technology design, driven by market evolution and the dynamic nature of demand, both in quantity and quality, requiring a rapid response to changes. This flexibility introduces new challenges from the design phase, demanding adaptability, integrability, and dynamic design to manage complexity and support system optimization.
2. Scalability offers the possibility of expanding licenses as activities grow.
3. Reliability is assured throughout the system's life cycle—defined during design, established in implementation, and maintained through consistent control.
4. Security design considers reliability, maintainability, and protection against predictable and unforeseen failures.
5. Maintenance also gains importance as systems grow more complex, ensuring that issues are resolved quickly.
6. Ergonomics focuses on user-friendly interfaces that facilitate routine tasks, anticipate errors, validate intermediate steps, and allow corrections.
7. Integration between workflows. A particularly important aspect in choosing a solution is data security, operation without interruptions and without data loss.

Cloud technology emphasizes safeguarding data, ensuring both its integrity and security. Hardware and operating systems, whether proprietary or open source, must be developed with robust measures to prevent and counter cyber-attacks. The Cloud model must incorporate a structured approach that restricts access to cloud data through multiple layers of security.

Managing security remains a complex challenge, as protection systems must be continuously enhanced. Despite advanced technologies, vulnerabilities can still emerge and may be exploited. The primary risks faced by end users and IT security professionals involve preventing cyber-attacks and minimizing losses. The increasing threat of cyber-attacks has made customers more cautious about online payment systems and virtual business platforms. Governments must recognize these risks, enact appropriate policies, and adapt legislation to mitigate the impact of cyber-attacks. As a member of the European Union, Romania has aligned its data protection regulations with the EU Data Protection Directive, strengthening its legal framework. Romania has also established itself as a strong player in the competitive global cybersecurity market. A noteworthy example is the Romanian company Bitdefender, a leader in internet security solutions and antivirus software.

The critical focus for users and IT security specialists remains on minimizing risks, enhancing preventive measures, and reducing the impact of potential cyber threats.

Table no. 1. Recommendations that can reduce the risks of cyber-terrorist attacks.

Risks	Recommendation
The Operating System is not updated	Up-date must be installed regularly
The system is not secured with a strong password	Passwords must be changed regularly
Unprotected system	The system must be protected with a firewall and applications updated antivirus software
Unsolicited or suspicious emails	Should be avoided or opened with caution
Email, file and application servers are not secure	Servers must be protected with a strong security solution
Devices connected to the Internet are not secured	All devices connected to the Internet must be secured to prevent unauthorized access

Source: processing after the site https://www.bitdefender.ro/business

In recent years, the adoption of digital technologies has become essential for companies seeking to remain competitive in a dynamic economic environment. Cloud-based ERP and CRM solutions, recognized for their flexibility and scalability, play a central role in process optimization and efficient resource management. The data presented in the tables below highlight current trends and the economic impact of these technologies on organizations of all sizes. The study includes comparative analyses between companies that have adopted cloud solutions and those that have not yet implemented such technologies, emphasizing differences in operational efficiency and competitiveness.

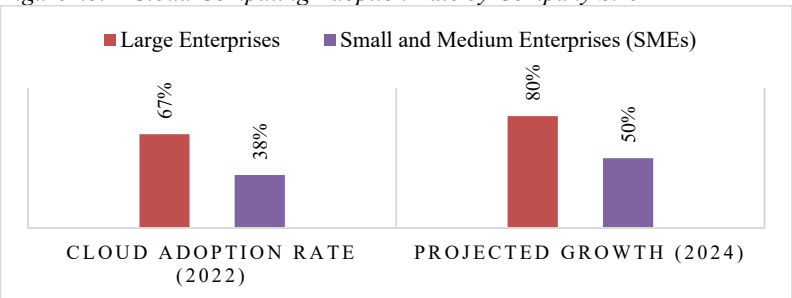
Table no. 2. Global Cloud Computing Market Growth (2020-2024)

Year	Global Cloud Computing Market Value (billion USD)
2020	371,1
2021	421,0
2022	545,8
2023	597,3
2024	675,0 (projected)

Source: Created by the author based on data sourced from Statista, https://www.statista.com/statistics/273818/global-revenue-generated-with-cloud-computing-since-2009/

Table no.2 highlights the steady growth of the global cloud computing market from 2020 to a projected 675 billion USD in 2024. This increase reflects the widespread adoption of cloud solutions driven by the need for digital transformation, especially due to the rise of remote work, increased automation, and the pursuit of cost efficiency. The data demonstrate a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 17.9%, showing cloud computing's strong appeal across industries as a cost-effective and flexible IT solution.

Figure no. 2 Cloud Computing Adoption Rate by Company Size

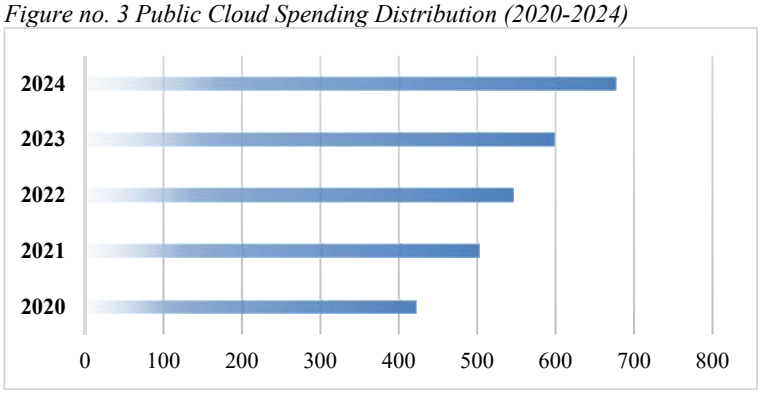


Source: Created by the author based on data sourced from McKinsey Global Institute, https://www.mckinsey.com

The adoption of cloud technologies differs significantly by company size. Large enterprises lead with a 67% adoption rate, projected to reach 80% by 2024, largely due to their ability to allocate substantial resources to digital transformation initiatives. For SMEs, adoption is projected to grow from 38% to 50% by 2024, driven by increasing accessibility to scalable, cloud-based solutions. This trend illustrates that cloud solutions are becoming essential tools for companies of all sizes, providing them with a competitive edge through enhanced flexibility and cost savings.

The data show a significant increase in public cloud spending from 421 billion USD in 2020 to a projected 675 billion USD by 2024. Public cloud services, such as SaaS (Software as a Service) and IaaS (Infrastructure as a Service), are increasingly preferred due to their ability to lower infrastructure costs, offer scalable resources, and facilitate rapid implementation.

Figure no. 3 Public Cloud Spending Distribution (2020-2024)



Source: Created by the author based on data sourced from Flexera's State of the Cloud Report 2023

This shift towards public cloud solutions underscores their vital role in supporting business agility and cost efficiency in a dynamic economic landscape.

Table no. 3 Benefits of Cloud Computing for Companies

Benefit	Description
Cost Reduction	Reduces Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) by 30-40% and eliminates maintenance costs
Business Resilience	Disaster recovery times are reduced to as little as 2.1 hours
Environmental Impact	Carbon emissions reduced by 84% for companies switching from on-premise to cloud solutions
Flexibility and Scalability	Allows rapid adjustment of resources according to demand

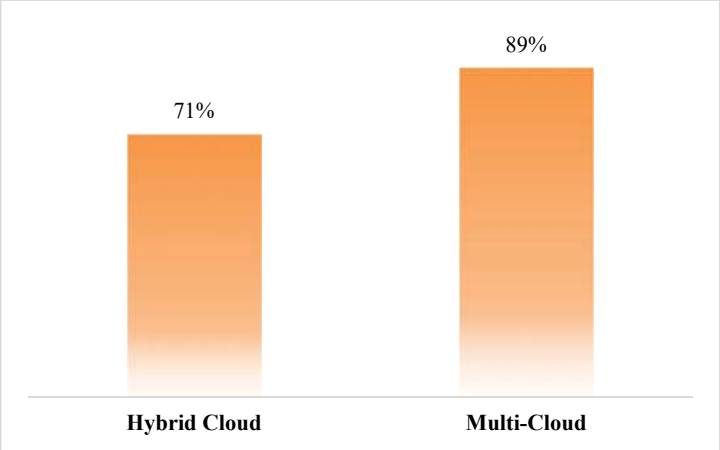
Source: Created by the author based on information from the Accenture report "Environmental Benefits of Cloud Computing

This table outlines the major benefits of adopting cloud computing, with cost reduction and enhanced business resilience at the forefront. Reduced TCO and eliminated maintenance costs make cloud solutions highly attractive. Additionally, cloud infrastructure supports rapid disaster recovery, significantly reducing downtime. Companies can also achieve substantial reductions in carbon emissions, making cloud solutions not only economically viable but also environmentally responsible. The flexibility and scalability offered by cloud computing allow companies to efficiently respond to fluctuating market demands.

The widespread adoption of hybrid and multi-cloud strategies reflects companies' pursuit of balance between security, cost, and performance. In 2022, 71% of companies used a hybrid cloud approach, integrating public and private cloud environments to maintain data security while

leveraging public cloud cost advantages. Furthermore, 89% of organizations employed a multi-cloud strategy, indicating a preference for flexibility and avoiding vendor lock-in.

Figure no. 4 Cloud Strategy Adoption by Companies (2022)



Source: Created by the author based on data sourced from Thales Data Threat Report https://cpl.thalesgroup.com/2022/data-threat-report

This trend illustrates a strategic approach to cloud adoption, allowing companies to select the best services from multiple providers while minimizing risk.

4. Case study: expanding the service offering – SaaS and WizPro ERP

In recent years, ERP providers have focused on small and medium-sized companies. The acquisition, configuration and administration of servers require time and capital, resources to which small and medium-sized businesses are very sensitive. In addition, small and medium-sized enterprises do not have the IT infrastructure or the budget necessary to implement, maintain, update, secure and manage their own servers to ensure continuity and are, as a rule, stuck, using rudimentary systems and less performing applications that reduce productivity.

Wizrom Software is a provider of business management software solutions on the Romanian market since 1992. The situation it faced was to analyze and decide what the strategy would be to support the increase in the number of clients and projects every year, in the conditions in which it was more and more difficult for companies to invest, purchase and pay the full price of the solution, whether it was the software part or the infrastructure. At the same time, many client companies have reorganized their businesses, and efficiency has become the watchword in any business. To face a market in which client companies no longer had the same budgets as in the past, solutions were sought and examined both for keeping current clients and for attracting new clients.

The company analyzed the IT requirements vs those from the Business perspective for the implementation of an ERP-type SII.

The objectives pursued from an IT point of view:

- Management, preservation and easy access to the knowledge and information base
- Maintaining compliance and preventing information loss
- Access for as many users as possible, with various requirements
- Expansion of existing investments

Pursued business objectives:

- Simplification and reduction of implementation costs
- Management of communications and collaboration
- Interoperating with clients and partners on a global level
- Maximizing productivity and innovation
- Attracting and keeping talents

These common objectives were found in the case of clients of all sizes and vertical industries, becoming challenges for finding alternative solutions for our case study company.

Figure no. 5 The existing IT&C technologies and the need for services at high quality standards

The existing IT&C technologies and the need for services at high quality standards facilitated the search for new solutions:	Renting software solutions through a system like operational leasing.
	Provision of integrated database hosting solutions and application rental.

Source: Created by the author, https://www.bitdefender.ro/business

Wizrom Software identified a growing demand in the business sector for comprehensive solutions, prompting increased investment in Software as a Service (SaaS) and cloud computing technologies. The company developed cloud-ready solutions and introduced alternative products to the market, creating innovative options tailored to the evolving needs of clients. The initial step in this transformation involved adapting their products to meet new market demands, enabling them to deliver specialized services to customers seeking to expand their operations and transition to online platforms.

Recognizing the advantages of an all-inclusive integrated solution, the software provider featured in this case study decided to incorporate this approach into their portfolio. The solution addresses genuine business needs, enhancing business value while driving both individual and organizational productivity. One significant advantage of choosing a hosting service provider is the optimized allocation of financial resources, coupled with access to high-quality infrastructure features such as redundancy, advanced cooling systems, and scalability for critical applications. Moreover, by offering cloud-based ERP solutions, even mid-sized IT companies can effectively compete with larger industry players, leveling the competitive landscape and broadening their market reach.

WizPro ERP is addressed to large companies in Romania that need to keep under control financial-accounting activities, management, logistics, sales, production, as well as the management of fixed assets. This ERP system provides integration and automation for all these core elements of any company's business, and additionally adds CRM functions for customer relationship management, project management, streamlining of maintenance and service activities, and production planning. The software suite proposed by Wizrom is an ERP solution that allows working from many devices: computer, laptop, mobile phone and tablet with Android and iOS operating systems. Accessible also in the form of a program that is installed on the computer (On Premise) and as SaaS (software as a service) in the cloud, WizPro ERP Romania is a modern ERP system that can be used from any device connected to the Internet.

The latest Gartner report includes WizPro ERP among the most relevant and performing ERP solutions with more than 7,000 customers worldwide. Wizrom has over 300 clients with approximately 10,000 users who use professional application hosting services in a Data Center.

Benefits of the Software as a Service (SaaS) solution:

- hardware equipment (database server, application server, back-up server);
- licenses (Windows Server, Terminal Services, Antivirus);
- firewall to secure data access; broadband Internet access in the Data Center;
- equipment maintenance services; electric current supply, redundant sources;
- daily back-up services for applications and databases; recovery in case of necessity.

The main objective is to expand the product offering, creating service options for each of the business software products.

In perspective, the company is counting on an increase in the demand for solutions that generate benefits as quickly as possible for its customers, considering that the efficiency of operating costs remains the basic challenge for all companies, in addition to attracting new customers. At the same time, at another level, the loyalty of existing customers is pursued by expanding the ERP system with new modules and integrating it with Intelligent Business solutions.

Currently, the new enterprise model version 2.0 is taking shape, oriented to the use of collaborative work platforms and tools that are based on emerging web 2.0 social technologies, within companies, or between companies and their partners or customers, which determines a changed attitude towards knowledge as well as towards power.

The Leaders 2020 global study, launched by SAP together with Oxford Economics, shows that only 16% of the participating companies have implemented leadership strategies adapted to the digital economy, strategies through which they managed to lead the digital transformation at the level of the entire company, to improve their performance and having more engaged employees. The study also showed that these companies managed to understand the importance of implementing such a strategy and to surpass their competition in a series of performance indicators. Thus, companies that benefit from the opportunities offered by the digital economy are 38% more likely to record increases in profit and revenue (76% versus 55%), have more satisfied employees (87% versus 63%), and enjoy of a higher degree of employee loyalty (75% versus 54%).

In the analysis, four directions were identified through which managers lead the digital transformation:

- the vision of the management regarding the integration of digital technologies in all activities and at all levels of the company.
- acceleration of the decision-making process – competitive organizations emphasize decision-making based on data analyzed in real time.
- simplification - reduction of complexity and bureaucracy, by making the latest technologies available to all employees; building a digital workforce – improving digital skills not only at the executive level, but at all levels, which allows a strategic use of these technologies.

5. Conclusions

The rapid increase in data volumes and the swift development of IT equipment are driving companies to adapt their strategies. The diversification of data types requiring management demands modern solutions for handling applications, files, and documents, enabling businesses to better align with market dynamics. In today's economic context, it is crucial for companies to cut costs and enhance their financial and economic performance. Cost reduction relies heavily on leveraging the potential of new technologies and IT&C services, such as Cloud Computing and Software as a Service.

New ERP SaaS or Cloud solutions are more cost-effective than traditional systems, especially for companies without the necessary infrastructure, as they reduce both implementation time and initial expenses. IT resources have become a key driver of success, acting not only as an operational backbone but also as tools for marketing and strategic initiatives. Organizations need to reassess the role of knowledge management in supporting decision-making processes. Strengthening digital and technological skills remains essential, even in times of crisis or financial constraints. Modern software applications speed up decision-making in the era of large-scale databases. Leading IT companies are introducing solutions designed to simplify data processing, decrease workloads, and accelerate processes while providing real-time access to information. Companies that have adopted data visualization tools have uncovered additional benefits. Combining advanced analytics with visualization technologies not only improves decision-making but also fosters cross-departmental collaboration to address complex business challenges.

In a competitive and rapidly changing economic environment, optimizing decision-making depends on the adaptability of IT systems to keep pace with evolving demands. These systems must provide real-time information to enable timely and informed decisions. IT companies prioritize offering competitive, innovative services that match the speed of technological advancements. At the same time, development strategies and decision-making processes remain essential pillars for the growth and sustainability of organizations.

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